



FEATURE STORY | PG.

KABAROLE DISTRICT LEADERS ADVOCATE FOR DIGITALIZATION IN GOVERNMENT ASSET DISPOSAL

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Contributors

Stephen Ainganiza Senior Communications Officer Fort Portal City

Christopher Tusiime, Communication Officer, Bunyangabu

Baingana Samuel, Communication Officer, Kyegegwa

Kabugho Sharon, Communication Officer, Kasese

Kajumba Gorretti, Fort Portal Journalist

Mbabazi Sylvia, Communication Officer, Bundibugyo

Atuhaire Johnson, Communication Officer, Kyenjojo

Joy Kiiza, Senior IT Officer, Kamwenge



TUSIIME CHRISTOPHER

CHIEF EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 28th edition of the Rwenzori Times Weekly Newsletter! In this issue, we present a collection of insightful articles that we believe will both educate and entertain you.

One of the significant discussions this week centers around Kabarole district leaders advocating for the government to adopt modern technology and digitalization in the disposal of government assets. Such a shift promises to streamline current processes, which are often cumbersome and inefficient due to outdated guidelines and policies. Embracing digital solutions could enhance transparency and efficiency, ultimately benefiting both the government and its citizens.

In a bid to ensure the quality and safety of consumables, the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) rigorously tests every beverage to verify compliance with safety standards and to detect harmful substances. This commitment to public health is crucial in safeguarding the well-being of our communities.

We are also excited to report

the launch of the long-awaited maintenance works on the Habyapa Galiboleka-Mukonda-Mukyeeya road in Kyegegwa District, funded by a maintenance grant of 190 million shillings. This initiative is a testament to the transformative power of infrastructure development, enhancing access to essential services and improving the overall quality of life for residents.

In Kasese district, a pilot electrification project spearheaded by KIIMA Foods in collaboration with Smart Villages Research Group and supported by Innovate UK is bringing light to communities that have never experienced electricity. This project is an inspiration of hope, significantly improving the lives of residents and fostering economic growth.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) is taking decisive action against the

proliferation of fake, unregistered, expired, and counterfeit agricultural inputs in the Rwenzori region. Through its Department of Crop Inspection and Certification, MAAIF is ramping up enforcement operations to protect farmers and ensure the integrity of agricultural practices.

In Bundibugyo District, local leaders are urging investors to broaden their search for gold and base metals, aiming to unlock the full potential of the district's rich natural resources. This call to action highlights the importance of sustainable mineral development for the region's economic future.

Finally, we celebrate the success of the Grow Project, which has

empowered over 600 women through a weeklong training program organized by Enterprise Uganda. This initiative aims to foster entrepreneurship among women in the Rwenzori region, paving the way for economic independence and community development.

As we delve into these and many more interesting stories, we hope you find them both enlightening and inspiring. The Rwenzori Times editorial team wishes you joyous reading and encourages you to engage with the content, as together we can foster a brighter future for our communities.

Warm regards

KABUGHO SHARON

Editor



AINGANIZA STEPHEN

Editor

Rwenzori Times

KABAROLE DISTRICT LEADERS ADVOCATE FOR DIGITALIZATION IN GOVERNMENT ASSET DISPOSAL



Mr. Ntate James, Team Leader from the Inspectorate of Government, talking to District Leaders

Stephen Ainganiza Senior Communications Officer Fort Portal City

Kabarole district leaders are calling on the government to embrace modern technology and digitalization in the disposal of government assets. This initiative aims to streamline the current processes, which are often cumbersome and inefficient due to outdated guidelines and policies.

Officials from the Inspectorate of Government, specifically the Directorate of Ombudsman Affairs, are conducting a comprehensive study to evaluate

the level of compliance among local governments with the laws governing the disposal of public assets, particularly transport equipment.

According to the team leader, Mr Ntate James, the study's objective is to assess adherence to the legal framework for asset disposal, identify systemic weaknesses, evaluate the financial and operational consequences of delayed disposals, and propose strategies to enhance compliance and transparency.

During a meeting with Kabarole



The team discussing the proposals for the disposal of assets.

district leaders, including heads of departments and sections at the district headquarters in Kitumba, Mr. Ntate emphasized the importance of compliance in the disposal of government assets. He urged Kabarole leaders, recognized as a model district, to gather substantial information that could assist the government in improving asset disposal processes, ultimately contributing to the development of a better Uganda.

However, during the discussions, Mr. Godfrey Ruyonga, the District Natural Resources Officer, highlighted the need for the government to adopt technology and digitalize the asset disposal process. He argued that such a system would mitigate delays and undercharging issues associated with the current manual

processes. “The government should implement a digitalized system for asset disposal that alerts officials when assets reach a certain stage, allowing for immediate disposal rather than waiting for valuers, which often results in diminished asset value,” Ruyonga stated.

Christine Kabanyaka, the Senior Procurement Officer, pointed out that the existing disposal system suffers from several inefficiencies, including a lack of weighing machines, high transportation costs for valuers, and delays in receiving reports from the Ministry of Works. She suggested that localizing the disposal process could significantly improve efficiency.

Dr. Kalyegira Stephen, the District Health Officer, raised another critical issue: the deteriorating

condition of motorcycles used by health workers. He noted that many of these vehicles are so worn out that by the time they are considered for disposal, they are effectively scrap. "Our staff are at risk riding these junk motorcycles, which poses a serious safety concern," he remarked.

The team collectively proposed several improvements to the asset disposal process within local governments. Key recommendations include the digitalization of the disposal system, enhanced capacity building for users on asset utilization and disposal, and the procurement of vehicles for departmental heads and critical staff, similar to the practice for Members of Parliament

every five years. They also suggested that vehicles procured by central ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, should be replaced every five years while they still retain value.

Mr. Marvin Mugarra, the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, expressed optimism that the information gathered by the team would inform the government on necessary policy improvements.

By adopting these recommendations, Kabarole leaders believe they can significantly enhance the efficiency and transparency of government asset disposal, ultimately benefiting the community and the nation as a whole.

INSIDE UNBS' DRINKS LAB: THE TESTS THAT SEPARATE SAFE BEVERAGES FROM DANGEROUS BREWS

Christopher Tusiime, Communication Officer, Bunyangabu

At the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), every drink brought in for testing is examined for mainly two things: quality, whether it matches what it

claims; and safety, whether it contains anything that could harm consumers.

That work is grounded in the law, The UNBS Act (Cap. 210), which



Inside one of the state-of-the-art testing labs at UNBS. Photo by Christopher Tusiime

empowers the Bureau to test locally manufactured or imported commodities to confirm whether they conform to declared standards, and to provide facilities for examination and analysis, thereby ensuring consumer protection and promoting fair trade.

Duncan Mugume, a Sample Reception Officer at UNBS, says most samples are submitted by businesses seeking product certification. Others come from walk-in clients who want their products tested. Some are submitted through imports, while UNBS surveillance teams also pick products from the market and deliver them to the labs for analysis.

Once a sample is received, it is recorded in the Laboratory Management Information

System (LIMS), given a laboratory identification number, and then sent to the right lab; chemistry, microbiology, electrical, petroleum, or engineering materials depending on what needs to be tested.

But the process is designed to limit bias. Eva Namutebi, the Deputy Head of the Chemistry Laboratory, says samples are also received again at the testing laboratory, where they are assigned unique codes. The goal is to keep analysts working strictly as technical staff, without contact with clients.

Mugume says turnaround time depends on the testing queue and the nature of the analysis. Some tests can take around 10 working days, while many others take up to 20 working days. A few products,

such as cement, may take longer.

In the Chemistry Laboratory that handles alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages like beers, wines, spirits, sodas and juices, Mujabi Isaac, a Senior Analyst, says the lab focuses on quality and safety.

For alcoholic drinks, one of the first checks is alcohol content. Mujabi explains that beers are commonly classified as strong, medium, or light, and each category is tied to a certain alcohol percentage. If a producer states a strength on the label, UNBS expects the laboratory result to match that claim.

He gives the example of gin where a product can fail certification if it is labelled, for instance, as 40% alcohol content, yet the lab finds the percentage is much lower.

“It’s about not cheating the customer,” Mujabi says. “It’s like paying for a full kilogram of meat and being given half.”

But quality alone is not enough. Mujabi says they also test against methanol in alcoholic products.

He says methanol is dangerous and should not be present as part of normal alcohol. At high levels, methanol can cause severe harm, including blindness, coma, brain

damage, and death. He adds that manufacturers must have processes that prevent methanol contamination or remove it during production.

Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) -- an international medical humanitarian organisation that provides medical assistance to people affected by conflict,



Mujabi Isaac, a Senior Analyst at UNBS says gins must have the exact alcoholic content percentage as claimed by the producer or they will not pass the certification test. Photo by Christopher Tusiime.

epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare -- warns that methanol poisoning can occur when people consume alcohol adulterated with methanol, often by producers

trying to lower production costs and increase profit.

“Thousands of people are poisoned by methanol every year. The fatality rate in an outbreak is often reported to be 20% to 40%,” reads part of the statement on their website, methanolpoisoning.msforg.

And Uganda has experienced this tragedy before. In 2022, methanol was confirmed to have killed 17 people in Lira City after they consumed a local gin known as City 5. UNBS said in a statement that it had not certified City 5 Gin for conformity to the relevant standards and that it therefore should not have been on sale to the public.

UNBS added that laboratory analysis showed the gin had excessive methanol adulteration, reported to be between 17 and 16,183 times higher than the acceptable level of 50 milligrams per litre specified in the standard for gin.

Doctors Without Borders further notes that toxic dose depends on concentration and the treatment provided. As little as 30ml is reported to be the minimum fatal dose for an adult, while 10ml can cause blindness. Without treatment, symptoms can progress into visual

disturbances, coma, brain damage, and death.

For non-alcoholic beverages such as sodas and juices, Mujabi says the lab does not expect to find alcohol. Analysts also check sugar levels and caffeine, especially in energy drinks. Caffeine may be allowed, he explains, but must remain within acceptable limits because excessive levels can affect consumers.

Despite strong lab systems, UNBS says broader market challenges persist. During a four-day engagement with media practitioners in Mukono District that started on March 1, Daniel Arorwa, the Manager for Market Surveillance at UNBS, said substandard and counterfeit goods continue to circulate in Uganda. He attributed this to factors including public apathy, poor compliance culture, low public awareness about standards, a high prevalence of informal markets and informal manufacturing setups, inadequate resources, and porous borders.

To reduce risk, Arorwa urged consumers to confirm expiry dates before purchasing products, review ingredients, and check whether products carry a UNBS Q-mark. He said consumers can report concerns to UNBS through the toll-free line

0800 133 133.

Inside the drinks lab, the work may look routine, with many forms, codes, machines, and numbers. However, its primary purpose is

practical, mainly to ensure the label tells the truth and to prevent dangerous substances from being added to what people drink.

KYELEGWA LAUNCHES MAINTENANCE WORKS ON THE HABYAPA-GALIBOLEKA-MUKONDA-MUKYEEYA ROAD TO BOOST CONNECTIVITY & ECONOMIC GROWTH

By Baingana Samuel, Communication Officer, Kyegegwa

Kyegegwa District has officially launched the long-awaited maintenance works on the Habyapa-Galiboleka-Mukonda-Mukyeeya road. Valued at budget of 190 million Ugandan shillings, of the the maintenance grant, the project is fore-run by Kyegegwa District Local Government Works Department ensuring that local resources and expertise are fully leveraged for the benefit of the community.

Colonel Bright Alex Nzirimu, affirmed the transformative role of high-quality infrastructure in enhancing access to essential services for the community.

The Habyapa-Galiboleka-Mukonda-Mukyeeya road maintenance project spans an impressive 15 kilometers and is designed to

In an event, held mid February, Kyegegwa Resident District Commissioner (RDC), Retired





Hon. Birungi Molly secretary for works kyegegwa DLG addressing the community of Galiboleka

significantly improve transportation and connectivity in the region. Once completed, it will provide smoother, safer, and more efficient access for residents to vital services such as healthcare, education, and markets, ensuring a higher quality of life for local communities.

Engineer Adolf Mwesigye, representing the Kyegegwa District Local Government Works Department, outlined the full scope of the project, which includes: comprehensive bush clearing along the road corridor, road alignment and widening to accommodate increasing traffic, grading and compaction for improved road

surface quality, installation of reinforced concrete culverts to manage water flow, desilting of existing culverts and side drains to prevent blockages, swamp rising and spot gravelling to improve stability and accessibility and distribution of tree seedlings to local communities as part of environmental sustainability efforts.

This multifaceted approach ensures that the road will not only address long-standing challenges but will also promote sustainability through tree planting initiatives aimed at preserving the local environment.

Mr. Balaba Swaibu, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO),



Mr. Balaba Swaibu CAO – Kyegegwa on the launch of the road

emphasized the importance of adhering to the Physical Planning and Building Control Act. This ensures that the project maintains its integrity and meets long-term standards of safety and functionality. He also urged the local community to actively engage in maintaining the infrastructure by keeping miter drains and road offshoots clear of debris to prevent future blockages and extend the lifespan of the road. According to RDC Retired Colonel Bright Alex Nzirimu, good infrastructure adds significant value to every aspect of life. He explained that improved roads lead to increased productivity, especially in agriculture.

“With better access to markets, healthcare, and education, our communities will thrive. I encourage residents to take full advantage of these improvements, particularly in agriculture, by planting more coffee and other high-value crops,” he said.

The RDC urged drivers to observe speed limits and exercise caution on the newly upgraded road. Speeding remains a major risk factor, calling for the community’s collective responsibility to ensure safety for all road users.

The road maintenance project is expected to be completed by March 30, 2026, with early indicators suggesting significant

improvements. Upon completion, the newly upgraded road will not only facilitate smoother transportation but will also be a key enabler of economic growth, enhancing the flow of goods, services, and people across the region.

This project is a vital step toward

fostering a more connected, productive, and safer environment for Kyegegwa District's residents, demonstrating the district's ongoing commitment to sustainable development through infrastructure improvement.

LEGACY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: KASANGO WILLIAM RETIRES FROM KAMWENGE DISTRICT SERVICE

By Joy Kiiza, Communication Officer, Kamwenge

On February 26, 2026, Kamwenge District Local Government proudly and warmly bid farewell to one of its most dedicated and visionary public servants, Mr Kasango William, the outgoing Head of the Natural Resources Department.

After attaining the mandatory retirement age of 60, Mr. Kasango officially handed over office, marking the close of an extraordinary 16-year chapter of service to Kamwenge District since his appointment in January 2010.

Mr Kasango William began his service to Uganda in 1994 as a young forestry officer in the former Ministry of Natural Resources. His passion for environmental conservation and sustainable resource management quickly distinguished him as a committed and capable officer.

In January 2010, he was appointed District Natural Resources Officer for Kamwenge District Local Government, a position he faithfully held until his retirement. Over the years, he steered the Natural Resources Department with professionalism, integrity, and unwavering dedication.



Mr Kasango William(middle)posing with internal Auditor & natural resources staff after handover

For more than a decade and a half, Mr Kasango has been a pillar of commitment and calm leadership. His stewardship strengthened environmental protection efforts in the district and laid a firm foundation for sustainable development. His wisdom, composed guidance, and tireless work ethic have left a lasting imprint that will continue to inspire generations of public servants.

In his congratulatory message, Dr Kamanyire Alfred, Head of the Production Department and a long-time friend, applauded Mr. Kasango for completing his tour of service with honor and measurable impact. He noted that Mr Kasango's contributions significantly advanced the district's environmental and

development agenda.

Kamwenge Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Madam Harriet Katusiime, praised him as a highly respectful and principled civil servant who served Kamwenge District with integrity and excellence. As he transitions into a new chapter of life, she emphasized, the district celebrates not only the years he has served but also the enduring legacy he leaves behind, a legacy defined by dedication, growth, and professionalism.

District Chairperson Hon. Karungi Joseph expressed deep gratitude for Mr Kasango's service, saying that, if it were possible, the district would have gladly extended his tenure. He praised his pivotal role in designing



Mr Kasango William reading his handover report in the presence of the CAO, Auditor, and the natural resources staff.

the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) Phase Two and commended his dedication to mentoring and strengthening the capacity of junior departmental officers.

In his farewell remarks, Mr Kasango reflected on a career that saw him serve in more than 20 districts across Uganda before retiring from Kamwenge. He expressed deep gratitude to his colleagues in the Natural Resources Department and asked for forgiveness for any shortcomings during his tenure.

He encouraged staff to remain disciplined and professional, urging them to avoid erratic conduct

and to uphold the knowledge and qualifications they have earned. He extended special thanks to his dear wife with Canon Dorothy Esther Kasango and to the Chief Administrative Officer and his predecessors for their invaluable guidance and supervision, which he credited for enabling him to perform his duties diligently and effectively.

As Kamwenge District Local Government turns a new page, it does so standing on the firm foundation built by leaders like Mr. Kasango William. His contribution to environmental stewardship, institutional growth, and public service excellence will remain an integral part of Kamwenge's story.

SWER ELECTRICITY PILOT TRANSFORMS LIVES IN REMOTE KASESE COMMUNITIES



KIIMA Foods Mini-grid in Bwesumbu Subcounty.

By Kabugho Sharon, Communication Officer, Kasese

For decades, residents of remote villages in Buhuhira and Bwesumbu in Kasese District lived without electricity, relying on candles, torches, and long journeys to access even the simplest services. Today, a pilot electrification project implemented by KIIMA Foods in partnership with Smart Villages Research Group and supported by Innovate UK is beginning to change that reality.

Using Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) technology, a low-cost system that distributes electricity through a single overhead wire while the earth serves as the return path; the project has brought reliable electricity to households in Buhuhira and Bwesumbu sub-counties. Though still in its pilot phase, the initiative is already creating significant social and economic change in the communities it serves.

Brighter Homes, Better Education



while providing safer lighting. Torchlights and candles, previously common study tools, often posed risks to children’s eyesight and increased the likelihood of fire accidents.

New Opportunities for Rural Businesses

Mbambu Jane, a proud beneficiary of the SWER project.

For Kabugho Janet, a 40-year-old farmer in Buhuhira Sub-county, the arrival of electricity has transformed her children’s education.

Before the connection, her children studied by torchlight, and the family spent about UGX 16,000 on lighting each month. As a small-scale farmer, she says the cost was difficult to sustain.

Now her home is connected to reliable electricity.

“My children can now revise their books easily, and the power rarely goes off. Their performance in school has greatly improved,” Janet says.

The project has also reduced household costs

Beyond homes, access to electricity is creating new economic opportunities in the villages.

Bwambale Joshua, a resident of Kuruhe village in Bwesumbu Sub-county, says daily life has become significantly easier since electricity



A welding Workshop at the Mini Grid in Buhuhira Subcounty, empowering the youth with livelihood skills.



Joshua, a beneficiary of the Mini-grid utilizing the electricity in his home.

arrived.

Previously, he walked nearly 10 kilometres to another trading centre just to photocopy documents such as his national ID. His children studied using candlelight, exposing them to fire hazards and eye strain.

Today, electricity has enabled several businesses to emerge within the community. Welding workshops now fabricate doors and windows locally, salons operate in the trading centre, and residents can access computer services such as printing and photocopying.

Joshua says the project has also dramatically reduced his lighting costs from about UGX 20,000 to

around UGX 3,000 for servicing.

“My children can now watch television and study comfortably. Services that we used to travel long distances for are now available here,” he says.

Strengthening Local Agriculture

Electricity is also supporting agricultural productivity, the backbone of the local economy.

The project is anchored around Smart Agri-Business Centres established by KIIMA Foods, which generate power through mini-grids producing about 45 kilowatts.



These centres provide cold storage facilities that allow farmers to preserve agricultural products for longer periods, reducing post-harvest losses.

With reliable power, farmers can also process crops such as cassava into flour using electric milling machines, adding value to their produce and increasing incomes.

How the Technology Works

According to Bwambale Edgar, a technical officer with KIIMA Foods, the project relies on SWER technology, a system designed to deliver electricity to rural communities at a lower cost.

“Single Wire Earth Return uses a

single overhead wire to transmit electricity from the power source to the community,” Edgar explains. “Instead of using multiple wires like conventional electricity lines, the system uses the earth as the return path for the current.”

The electricity is generated at Smart Agri-Business Centres, mini-grids established by KIIMA Foods that produce about 45 kilowatts of solar power. From there, power is transmitted through a single conductor, sometimes as small as a 2-millimetre cable, to households within the community.

To complete the circuit, an earth rod is inserted into the ground at the household connection point. The

earth acts as the return pathway for the electrical current back to the nearby ground system.

“This method reduces the number of poles, wires, and infrastructure needed compared to conventional electricity distribution. That makes it a much more affordable solution for rural electrification,” Edgar says.

So far, the project has connected six households in Buhuhira and six in Mbata-Bwesumbu within a radius of about 500 metres from the Smart Agri-Business Centres.

Powering Agriculture and Local Services

The electricity is also strengthening the local agricultural economy.

The Smart Agri-Business Centres include cold storage facilities that allow farmers to preserve agricultural produce for longer periods, reducing post-harvest losses.

Electric power is also enabling machines used to process agricultural products such as cassava into flour, helping farmers add value to their produce and increase incomes.

KIIMA Foods has also organized a cooperative of 220 farmers to support collective marketing and strengthen agricultural livelihoods in the area.

Community-Wide Change

Local leaders say the project has brought a sense of progress to communities that previously felt forgotten.

Richard Syalya, LC₁ Chairman of Kuruhe Village, recalls a time when residents travelled long distances simply to charge their phones.

“Our children were growing up without even knowing what electricity looks like. Now people can charge phones, run machines, and access computer services within the village,” he says.

The increased lighting in homes and trading centres has also improved security and extended productive hours in the evenings. Looking Ahead

So far, 12 households- six in Buhuhira and six in Bwesumbu have been connected within a 500-metre radius of the Smart Agri-Business Centres. While the initial target was to reach 70 households, regulatory limitations and technical challenges have slowed expansion.

Even so, community members and project implementers say the early results demonstrate the potential of SWER technology to bridge the rural electrification gap.

RWENZORI FARMERS WARNED AS AUTHORITIES INTENSIFY WAR ON FAKE AGRICULTURAL INPUTS



Officials inspecting the Drug Shops.

Kajumba Gorretti, Fort Portal Journalist

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), through its Department of Crop Inspection and Certification, has ramped up enforcement operations in the Rwenzori region to combat the proliferation of

fake, unregistered, expired, and counterfeit agricultural inputs. This initiative has resulted in the closure of several shops and the arrest of one dealer, with investigations ongoing.

As the planting season draws



Some of the drugs impounded from the operation.

to a close, a time when demand for agricultural inputs surges, the nationwide compliance and certification inspection aims to protect farmers from the financial losses associated with substandard products flooding the market.

According to Fred Muzira, Senior Agricultural Inspector with the Department of Crop Inspection and Certification, it is the ministry's responsibility to regulate the quality and standards of agricultural inputs to safeguard farmers' investments. He explained that the enforcement exercise is being conducted across various regions of the country, starting in Kyegegwa District, where over 70 boxes of a bio-

organic fertilizer branded as Mabere Organic were impounded, leading to the arrest of the dealer for further questioning.

In Bundibugyo and Ntoroko districts, products such as Rapid Grow and Booster were seized for failing to meet established standards. In Fort Portal City, expired inputs were confiscated, and several shops were shut down for operating without the necessary ministry registration. Similar enforcement actions have also been carried out in Kabarole District, with inspections now extending to Kamwenge and other areas within the region.

Muzira highlighted that many Ugandans have accessed Parish

Development Model (PDM) funds to enhance their livelihoods and should not fall victim to unscrupulous dealers seeking quick profits. He noted that while an increasing number of individuals are entering the agricultural input production sector, some neglect to consult the ministry to ensure their products comply with required standards.

Both dealers and farmers are encouraged to seek guidance from agricultural extension workers and district agricultural officers to verify the authenticity of approved and certified inputs available in the market. Muzira stressed that businesses operating without

proper registration must engage with district agricultural offices to initiate the certification process. He also warned against mixing agro-input businesses with unrelated enterprises, as many agricultural chemicals are hazardous and require careful handling and storage.

In addressing concerns regarding arrests, Muzira clarified that both producers and sellers of counterfeit inputs are liable under the law, as counterfeiters often distribute their products through suppliers without formal advertising.

Murungyi Paul, Acting District



The closed drug shop after the owner escaping arrest.

Agricultural Officer for Bundibugyo, noted that the use of modern agricultural inputs in the district remains low, with many farmers still relying on traditional farming methods. He urged dealers found operating mixed businesses on a single premises to comply with ministry guidelines. Murungyi also appealed to MAAIF for enhanced collaboration and support for district agricultural offices in conducting regular inspections.

In Ntoroko District, Production Officer Dr. Businge Patrick Bagonza reported that the district has only three agro-input shops, primarily due to its dry climatic conditions. Livestock-related agribusinesses dominate the area, with many farmers sourcing crop inputs from Fort Portal City. Dr Businge advocated for the establishment of enforcement police within the agriculture sector to address ongoing non-compliance among some traders and farmers.

Some agro-dealers expressed concerns regarding the arrests. Musinguzi John, CEO of Happy Farmers Shop in Kisenyi, Fort Portal City, argued that enforcement efforts should focus more on the producers of counterfeit inputs rather than retailers. He encouraged

fellow dealers to register their businesses with the ministry to operate legally and avoid penalties.

Another dealer, Mugenyi John, highlighted challenges in generating PRN numbers through the registration system and urged the ministry to streamline the process. He also recommended routine inspections in remote areas to ensure compliance.

Mugabe James, Agricultural Officer for Fort Portal Tourism City, called on all agro-dealers to register their premises with the ministry for certification and compliance. He stressed that dealers with multiple branches must register each location separately to facilitate proper inspections.

Mugabe revealed that farmers have frequently reported losses due to fake and expired agricultural inputs and advised dealers to separate and surrender expired products to the ministry for safe disposal.

The enforcement operation is ongoing and is expected to extend to Kamwenge and other districts within the Rwenzori sub-region as the ministry continues its efforts to safeguard farmers and uphold agricultural standards.

BUNDIBUGYO: DISTRICT LEADERS PUSH FOR DEEPER MINERAL EXPLORATION TO UNLOCK HIDDEN WEALTH POTENTIAL



Stakeholders engagement meeting about mineral exploration activities.

Mbabazi Sylvia, Communication Officer, Bundibugyo

Bundibugyo District leaders have urged M/s Sahanik Resources Uganda Limited to widen and intensify its search for gold and base metals in the district in order to uncover the full potential of Bundibugyo's natural resources.

The District chairperson Hon Tibakunirwa Robert advised the company (officially licensed by the Directorate of Geological Survey and Mines (DGSM) under the Ministry of

Energy and Mineral Development) to conduct a preliminary gold and base metals exploration project within Bundibugyo District not to only concentrate on their selected areas but to seriously explore more sites and liaise with the local community to get necessary clues to ensure that the exact natural resources and mineral potential of the District is discovered.

He said this during a District stakeholders' engagement meeting

with the exploration company held at the district headquarters.

According to the Sahanik Resources Uganda Limited exploration progress summary report presented to the district technical team, it was discovered that this company is licensed to carry out mineral exploration and mining activities within the selected areas in the district covering approximately 137.76km² for a period of 4 years.

With the guidance of the office of the Chief Administrative Officer, the company conducted preliminary gold exploration activities in Bubandi Sub-County, Buganikere and Nyahuka Town Councils, particularly in Buhanda and Njuule villages. The results indicated some potential for alluvial gold mineralization, especially along Njuule stream in Bubandi Sub-County. While doing this, the company is fully committed to responsible operations, protecting the environment and local communities through compliance to all relevant regulations.

Basing on the above results, the company plans to proceed with the next phase of detailed exploration in the area by introducing a mobile and pilot gold processing plant. This phase is intended to help accurately estimate the quantity of alluvial

gold available and guide decisions making to all relevant laws.

The District Chairperson went ahead to caution the company not to camouflage under the disguise of exploration and yet on the other hand mining swindling the resource a practice stakeholders will not tolerate. He assured the general public that as the District technical team they will keep an eye monitoring their operations in ensuring that they are doing what they are licensed to do.

In the closing remarks, the Assistant Resident District Commissioner in charge of Bughendera Mr. Albert Musinguzi Kaleruga said that due to the financial benefits of cocoa as the back bone of the local economy, the majority of the community thought Cocoa was the gold of Bundibugyo. Therefore, Bundibugyo has got another great opportunity since real gold has been discovered within the District and will improve on livelihood of the people in Bundibugyo as well as government local revenue collections if fully utilized. He urged the exploration company to ensure environmental protection measures since most of their operations are related to land and yet the District is prone to disasters like floods and landslides more especially during rainy season.

ENTERPRISE UGANDA EQUIPS 600 WOMEN WITH BUSINESS SKILLS IN RWENZORI REGION



The trained women interacting during the break.

By Kajumba Gorretti –Fort Portal Journalist

Under the Grow Project, over 600 participants have benefited from hands-on skills thanks to a week-long training program organized by Enterprise Uganda aimed at fostering entrepreneurship among women.

This initiative, titled “Essential Skills for Women Entrepreneurs,” took place at the St Adolf Information Center in Fort Portal Tourism City.

The training attracted a diverse group of participants from various districts, including Kyenjojo, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Fort Portal City, Bunyangabu, Kasese, Kamwenge, Kyegegwa, Kitagwenda, and Kabarole.

Munduwa Peace, a key collaborator with Enterprise Uganda, passionately encouraged women to embrace entrepreneurship. She highlighted that starting and managing their



Trainees during the practical work of beekeeping

own businesses can often be more rewarding and sustainable than traditional employment.

Peace said that Enterprise Uganda's mission is to equip women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset to successfully manage and grow their enterprises.

She urged women not to confine themselves to household responsibilities but to actively pursue income-generating activities. Furthermore, she called upon men to support women's entrepreneurial efforts, reinforcing the importance of financial independence within households.

Jackline Tumwebaze, the Western Regional Officer for the Grow Project at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, urged women to leverage the government-

backed initiative, which offers loans at a remarkably low interest rate of 1 percent. She clarified that the Grow Money facility is designed for individuals rather than groups and requires collateral as security.

Tumwebaze explained that funds are available through participating banks, and beneficiaries who demonstrate good repayment habits may benefit from reduced interest rates.

For women seeking additional skills, Tumwebaze advised applying through district focal persons, highlighting that government programs are in place to provide further capacity building. She also encouraged women to access loans through banks where they hold accounts, noting that each participating bank has designated

contact persons to assist applicants throughout the process.

Despite the government's assurances, several women entrepreneurs expressed concerns regarding the accessibility of the Grow Money initiative.

Alleluia Grace from Fort Portal, Kebirungi Irene Namara, and Hope Mugenyi from Kabarole reported that commercial banks impose high interest rates and require land titles as collateral, which significantly limits access to affordable capital for small-scale women entrepreneurs.

Tuhaise Florence and Katusime Brenda from Bunyangabu echoed these frustrations, sharing their unsuccessful attempts to secure funding.

Additionally, Kajumba Margret and Madinah Faridah from Kyenjojo district highlighted that many women lack adequate information about the availability of loans and training opportunities, further hindering their participation in entrepreneurial activities.

The women collectively called upon government authorities to intervene and ensure that the Grow Money initiative remains accessible and supportive of their business growth rather than becoming an obstacle.

Charles Ocici, the Director General of Enterprise Uganda and lead facilitator during the training, emphasized that skills development is critical for business success. He encouraged women to utilize the region's fertile land productively rather than selling it, warning that failure to capitalize on local opportunities could lead to economic vulnerability.

Ocici urged participants to cultivate a strong work ethic, embrace competition, and confidently start businesses even in markets where similar enterprises already exist. He cautioned against taking loans without a clear investment plan, stressing the importance of proper financial management.

"In order to earn, you must be willing to work hard," he noted.

The training marked a significant step in strengthening women's entrepreneurial capacity in the Rwenzori region. As stakeholders continue to address concerns surrounding access to affordable financing under the Grow Project, the hope is that more women will be empowered to transform their ideas into successful businesses, contributing to economic growth and community development.

KATONGA WILDLIFE RESERVE IN LINE FOR BIGGER UPGRADE, AWAITS 11TH NATIONAL PARK STATUS



Group photo of participants after the entry meeting

Baingana Samuel, Communication Officer, Kyegegwa

The Government of Uganda has approved a policy proposal to elevate Katonga Wildlife Reserve to national park status, marking a significant step toward strengthening conservation and expanding eco-tourism opportunities in western Uganda.

The decision was endorsed by Cabinet in mid-February 2026 and now awaits consideration by the Parliament of Uganda. Once approved, Katonga will officially

become the country's 11th national park under the management of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

Situated along the northern banks of the Katonga River, the reserve spans approximately 210 square kilometres across Kyegegwa District, Kamwenge District, and Kazo District. The protected area was first gazetted in 1964 and is currently managed as part of the Kibale Conservation Area by UWA.

According to Mr Richard Kapere, Assistant Commissioner at UWA,



Mr. Balaba Swaibu CAO kyegegwa addressing stakeholders.

the elevation of Katonga to national park status will significantly strengthen conservation efforts, particularly in protecting critical wetlands and wildlife migration corridors. The development is also expected to enhance the area's profile as a premier eco-tourism destination, offering activities such as boat cruises, birdwatching, and guided nature walks.

Preparatory activities for the anticipated transition are already underway. On March 4, 2026, UWA convened an entry meeting at the reserve's headquarters in Kikorogoto, Ruyonza Sub-county, Kyegegwa District. The meeting brought together technical teams from UWA alongside political

and administrative leaders from Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, and Kazo districts to discuss the roadmap for the upgrade process.

Initial developments at the reserve include the construction of a new administration block, land surveying, and other preparatory activities aimed at strengthening management and infrastructure.

Local leaders welcomed the development while emphasizing the importance of community engagement. Mr Byamukama Kisoke John, the LC V Chairman of Kyegegwa District, called on UWA to intensify public sensitization efforts to address concerns among residents



regarding ongoing surveying and related activities within the reserve.

Mr Swaibu also appealed to UWA to consider using district evaluation rates when compensating any individuals who may be affected during the transition.

Meanwhile, Mr Timothy Mutabazi, the chief surveyor overseeing

He reaffirmed the district’s commitment to supporting UWA throughout the transition process. Similarly, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Kyegegwa, Mr Balaba Swaibu, urged close collaboration between the UWA technical team and district authorities to ensure smooth implementation of the upgrade process.





Some of the animals at Katonga Wild Reserve

the mapping exercise, assured stakeholders that the surveying process is intended solely to clarify and document existing boundaries. He emphasized that the reserve will not expand beyond its current 210 square kilometres.

Historically, the Katonga area served as a hunting ground for the king of the Tooro Kingdom before later being used for sport hunting during the colonial era. Over the years, the reserve has evolved into an important conservation landscape known for its wetlands, birdlife, and diverse wildlife.

Parliament, the elevation of Katonga Wildlife Reserve to national park status is expected to further strengthen biodiversity conservation while unlocking new opportunities for sustainable tourism and community development in the region.

Katonga Wildlife Reserve is currently a vital habitat for over 30 mammal species and 150 bird species, with a focus on wetland, forest, and savanna ecosystems. Key species include the rare Sitatunga antelope, elephants, waterbucks, hippos, buffaloes, leopards, and various primates like colobus monkeys and baboons.

Once formally approved by

DRIVING CHANGE: HOW RWAMWANJA GIRLS ARE CHAMPIONING TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EDUCATION



GADC participants at Nkoma COU demonstrating the creation of Mushroom gardens.

Joy Kiiza, Senior IT Officer, Kamwenge

In the heart of Rwamwanja settlement, Kamwenge district, a transformative project is reshaping the lives of young girls, turning them into powerful advocates for education and champions of community change. The Girls as Drivers of Change (GADC) project, spearheaded by Save the Children, has made significant strides in increasing the retention rates of girls in school, breaking

barriers that once kept them out of classrooms and limiting their futures.

At the core of the GADC project lies the belief that education is a fundamental right for all children, and that girls, in particular, must be empowered to not only access education but to thrive within it. One of the most powerful tools of the program has been raising awareness among girls about their rights. By equipping them with

knowledge on how to advocate for their education and personal rights, the GADC project has instilled a sense of confidence and purpose in young girls.

Through various creative outlets like dramas, skits, and poems, the girls have actively engaged with their communities and school leaders, spreading a powerful message about the importance of keeping girls in school. These performances have become more than just artistic expressions they are tools of social change, challenging stereotypes and dispelling myths about girls' education. Through these initiatives, the girls not only share their own stories but also bring to light the stories of those who are unable to speak for themselves, making their voices heard in a way that resonates within the wider community.

One of the key barriers to education for girls in many communities is the challenge of menstrual health management. In the Rwamwanja settlement, many girls have been unable to attend school during their menstrual periods due to a lack of access to sanitary products. The GADC project, however, has

provided a solution through skills training on making reusable sanitary pads.

These pads, which are both sustainable and affordable, have empowered the girls to take control of their own health and well-being. Not only are the girls able to make the pads for themselves, but they also distribute them to their peers, ensuring that more girls can stay in school without the fear of missing out due to menstruation. This initiative has been a key factor in enhancing school attendance and reducing absenteeism among girls, ensuring that they continue their education uninterrupted.

The GADC project doesn't stop at education and advocacy. Understanding that economic empowerment is integral to long-term change, the project also trains girls in practical skills for developing business projects. These skills give girls the tools they need to become financially independent and contribute to their families and communities in meaningful ways.

With the support of Save the Children, the girls have been trained in various income-generating activities, such as piggery, mushroom farming, poultry farming, and the production of liquid and bar soaps.

These businesses have not only provided the girls with a source of income to support their school requirements but have also allowed them to reinvest in their education and help others.

As part of the project, the girls' business projects are funded, allowing them to put their newfound skills into practice. The selected projects have become models of success, with the girls proudly managing their businesses and generating income. Many of these businesses also serve a greater social purpose: supporting other girls who are not yet in school. By contributing to their school fees or buying essential school supplies, the girls have become true champions of change, fostering a cycle of support and empowerment that benefits the entire community.

The success of the GADC project in Rwamwanja is a testament to the resilience and determination of the girls involved. The program has not only improved their school retention and completion rates but has also transformed them into leaders who are actively shaping the future of their communities. The skills they have gained through the project advocacy, business development, and health education are not just helping them succeed in school

but are also equipping them to be changemakers in the wider society.

Through their advocacy, entrepreneurship, and community engagement, the girls have demonstrated what is possible when young women are given the tools and opportunities to succeed. Their stories are inspiring others to follow in their footsteps, proving that, with the right support, girls can drive meaningful change.

The success of the Girls as Drivers of Change project in Rwamwanja offers a powerful model for other communities. It shows that when girls are educated, empowered, and given the tools to advocate for themselves, they can overcome obstacles, defy expectations, and become the leaders their communities need.

In Rwamwanja, the project has not just changed the lives of the girls involved it has sparked a broader movement of change, where education, empowerment, and gender equality are not just ideals but achievable goals. The journey of these girls is far from over, and the impact of their work will continue to be felt for years to come. They are truly the drivers of change, not only in their schools but in the wider world.

KYENJOJO STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGE IN TALKS, REVIEWING IMPACT OF MICRO-SCALE IRRIGATION ON AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION



By Atuhaire Johnson, Communication Officer, Kyenjojo

Stakeholders in Kyenjojo District have intensified efforts to boost year-round agricultural production through irrigation conveying a high-level workshop to review the impact of micro-scale irrigation projects on agricultural productivity, farmer livelihoods, and climate resilience.

The workshop, held at the district headquarters brought together Ministry of Agriculture officials, district leaders, technical officers, agricultural extension workers, development partners, and representatives of farmer groups to evaluate the progress made so far and to discuss strategies for strengthening irrigation initiatives



The DPO, Mr Shem Ssekyanzi addresses the meeting,

across the district.

Micro-scale irrigation is a small, farmer-managed irrigation system that allows individual farmers or small groups to water crops using simple and relatively low-cost technologies. It is designed for small plots of land, often ranging from a backyard garden to a few acres. Instead of large government irrigation schemes that require dams and canals, micro-scale irrigation systems are portable, affordable, and easier to maintain, making them suitable for smallholder farmers.

The Micro-Scale Irrigation Program is a government initiative implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and

Fisheries to support smallholder farmers in accessing affordable irrigation technologies. The program provides subsidies that enable farmers to acquire equipment such as solar or motorized water pumps, sprinklers, drip irrigation kits, and water distribution pipes.

Under the initiative, farmers contribute a portion of the cost of the irrigation equipment while the government covers the larger share through a subsidy arrangement. The program primarily targets farmers operating on small plots of land and aims to promote year-round farming by reducing reliance on rainfall.

The meeting intervention forms part of Uganda's broader strategy

to modernize agriculture, increase productivity, and build resilience against climate change. By enabling farmers to irrigate crops during dry seasons, the program contributes to improved food security, increased household incomes, and expanded commercial agriculture in rural communities.

reviewed field experiences, success stories, and challenges encountered during the implementation of the irrigation systems, and discussions focussed on how the technology has contributed to improved food security, enhanced farm productivity, and increased resilience among farming households.



District technical teams highlighted that micro-scale irrigation has enabled farmers to diversify crop production, expand vegetable farming, and reduce reliance on rain-fed agriculture. This has not only

Micro-scale irrigation has increasingly become an important intervention in supporting farmers to maintain crop production throughout the year, particularly in the face of unpredictable rainfall patterns associated with climate change. Through the use of small irrigation systems such as solar-powered pumps, sprinklers, and drip irrigation technologies, farmers are now able to cultivate crops during dry seasons, improving both yields and household incomes.

strengthened household food availability but has also opened opportunities for farmers to participate more actively in local markets.

The District Production Officer, Mr. Shem Ssekyanzi, thanked the ministry of Agriculture and Government of Uganda for prioritizing Kyenjojo District among the beneficiaries of the program, noting that farmers have benefited exceedingly from it. He rallied a call to the beneficiaries, to make it their collective responsibility to ensure

that benefits from this program continue to be enjoyed even by the future generations.

The Senior Agricultural Engineer, Kyenjojo, Mr. Kayonjo Vincent, called for farmer-to-farmer field education, and farmer field schools, to enable passing on of knowledge between farmers themselves, sharing experiences, and learning from one another. He implored the farmers that benefited, to take good care of the facilities, maintain the water wells, do consistent records keeping, that reflect returns before and after usage of micro scale irrigation. He also encouraged them to do regular reporting in case of system breakdowns and make use of the existing warranties on their products for repairs or replacements.

He further requested them to increase the capacity of the program due to the overwhelming demand received last financial year, and considering the inquiries and applications in offing this year, and increase the extension grant to enable recruitment of more extension workers to support farmers on ground.

The engagement also provided a platform for stakeholders to identify lessons learned and explore

ways of scaling up successful irrigation models to benefit more farming communities across the district, with emphasis placed on strengthening farmer training, improving maintenance of irrigation equipment, and ensuring sustainable management of water resources.

Addressing the meeting, the Vice Chairperson Kyenjojo, Ms Grace Atuhaire, noted that investing in irrigation remains a critical step toward modernizing agriculture and improving livelihoods in rural communities. With continued collaboration between government institutions, development partners, and farmers, micro-scale irrigation is expected to play a pivotal role in transforming agriculture in Kyenjojo.

One of the beneficiaries, Rtd. Major Ngonzi, appealed to the ministry to reduce on the cost funding individual contribution from 25% to 15% to enable even other interested but less capable farmers to afford this facility. He implored his fellow farmers to maintain these facilities well, noting that much as they were acquired with a subsidy from the government, they were now personal properties that should help families in advancing government programs.

Eng. Grace Byansaansa, the

coordinator for Cluster 1 under Micro scale Irrigation, in the ministry of Agriculture, thanked the farmers for overwhelmingly embracing the program, and was hopeful that it was transforming communities in Kyenjojo. He called upon the beneficiaries to make use of the extension workers and agriculture office at the district for better returns. He reiterated he was hopeful many more would benefit from this program in the coming years. He also advised the beneficiaries to explore

security measures for their facilities, as these were big investments that attract thieves.

As deliberations continue, stakeholders remain optimistic that the insights gathered from the workshop will guide future planning and enhance the effectiveness of irrigation interventions, ultimately contributing to increased agricultural productivity and improved standards of living for farming households throughout the district.

KAMWENGE DISTRICT LAUNCHES CONSTRUCTION OF TWO SEED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Joy Kiiza, Senior IT Officer, Kamwenge

Kamwenge District registered immeasurable success in expanding access to secondary education with the launch of the construction of two secondary schools, Ntonwa and Bisozi Seed Schools, held on Friday, February 27th, 2026.

The event attracted a wide range of stakeholders, including community members, officials from the Ministry





Minister Hon Frank Tumwebaze, Chief Guest during the Ground breaking at Ntonwa Grounds.

of Education and Sports, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Resident District Commissioner, the District Chairperson, DEC members, the district works technical team, LCI and LCIII leaders, honourable councillors, and the contractor.

The chief guest at the events was the Minister for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Frank Tumwebaze, Member of Parliament for Kibale East, Kamwenge District.

The two seed schools will be constructed at a total cost of UGX 7 billion, with each school valued at

UGX 3.5 billion. The lead contractor for both projects is TAMSAK Development Link Limited.

Engineer Asaph Abenitwe from the Ministry of Education and Sports, representing the Permanent Secretary, noted that Kamwenge District successfully lobbied for four seed schools located in Ntonwa, Bisozi, Busiriba, and Kabambiro sub-counties. He thanked Hon. Frank Tumwebaze for his efforts in ensuring that the district benefits from these government programs.

He emphasized that construction



Engineer Abeinetwe Asaph from MOE&S handing over project documents to the contractor and District Leadership.

has officially commenced and is expected to be completed within 10 months. By 2027, the schools are expected to enroll their first cohort of students.

Each seed school will be fully equipped and designed as a complete double-stream lower secondary (O'Level) institution. Planned facilities include: Science laboratories, library, computer laboratory fully equipped with computers, staff quarters, two blocks of five-stance toilets for both boys and girls, plus staff toilets, incinerator, instructional materials, multipurpose hall, playground.

Engineer Abeneitwe stressed that

upon completion, there should be no child left out of school due to lack of access. He further highlighted that the project will be closely monitored by various oversight bodies, including the State House, the Parliamentary Committee, officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Inspectorate of Government, to ensure accountability and quality work.

Mr Nyesigomwe Boaz, LCIII Chairperson of Bwizi, welcomed and thanked all visitors who came to witness Ntonwa Sub-County receive a seed school. He noted that children in the area have long



Tamsak Development Link Limited staff lead contractor in both projects.

endured walking long distances to Bwizi or Kyenjojo to access secondary education. He extended special appreciation to the Bishop of East Rwenzori Diocese for donating 10.3 acres of land for the construction of the school.

Kamwenge Chief Administrative Officer, Madam Harriet Katusiime, congratulated the community and urged them to cooperate with and support the contractor throughout the construction process. She also commended district leaders for beginning to implement their

campaign promises.

District Chairperson Hon Karungi Joseph thanked leaders for their cooperation and called upon LC1 chairpersons to assess households in their villages, particularly to establish how many families are engaged in coffee farming. He emphasized that improving household livelihoods, especially through coffee production, will be a key focus of his term.

Resident District Commissioner Mr Aharikundira Africana cautioned the contractor against shoddy work,

emphasizing that all stakeholders expect high-quality infrastructure that will serve future generations effectively.

In his remarks, Hon Frank Tumwebaze thanked district leaders and community members for their strong teamwork, noting that collaboration has enabled Kamwenge District to attract several government development programs. He reaffirmed his commitment to delivering on his promises and continuing to work closely with the

community to address their needs.

The ground-breaking of Ntonwa and Bisozi Seed Schools signals a new chapter for education in Kamwenge District. Once completed, the schools will significantly reduce the distance students travel for secondary education and improve access to quality learning facilities. The community now looks forward to the successful completion of the projects and the enrollment of the first students in 2027.

NEW ADVENTURE FEATURES STRENGTHEN TOURISM TRANSFORMATION AT RWENZORI MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

By Kabugho Sharon, Communications officer, Kasese

Tourism infrastructure at Rwenzori Mountains National Park continues to get a remarkable facelift following major government investments aimed at improving visitor experience and increasing tourist numbers.

The developments were highlighted during a monitoring visit by the

Committee of Council in charge of Production, Marketing and Natural Resources, which toured several ongoing and completed tourism projects within the park.

While briefing the councillors at the park gate today March 5th, 2026, George Businge, the Senior Warden in charge of Rwenzori Mountains National Park, said the



District Council committee of production and Rwenzori Mountain gate.

park continues to register growth in visitor numbers, a trend he attributes to improved infrastructure and increased promotion of the destination.

According to Businge, the park received 7,703 visitors in the Financial Year 2023/2024, and the number increased further in Financial Year 2024/2025, with projections showing that the number could rise even higher this financial year.

He explained that the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities has funded several key projects aimed at strengthening tourism facilities in the park.

Among the completed developments is the construction of Elena Camp, the last accommodation point for climbers heading to Margherita Peak, the highest point of the Rwenzori Mountains. The ministry has also constructed accommodation facilities at Nyabitaba Camp, the first stop along the hiking trail, which can now host up to 40 visitors per night.

To improve accessibility within the park's wetlands, authorities have also completed 12.889 kilometres of boardwalks, allowing visitors to move easily through the boggy areas without difficulty.

Another major project underway is the construction of a Visitor Information Centre within the park. The facility, funded through support from the World Bank and implemented through the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, has been contracted to KenFields Services Limited.

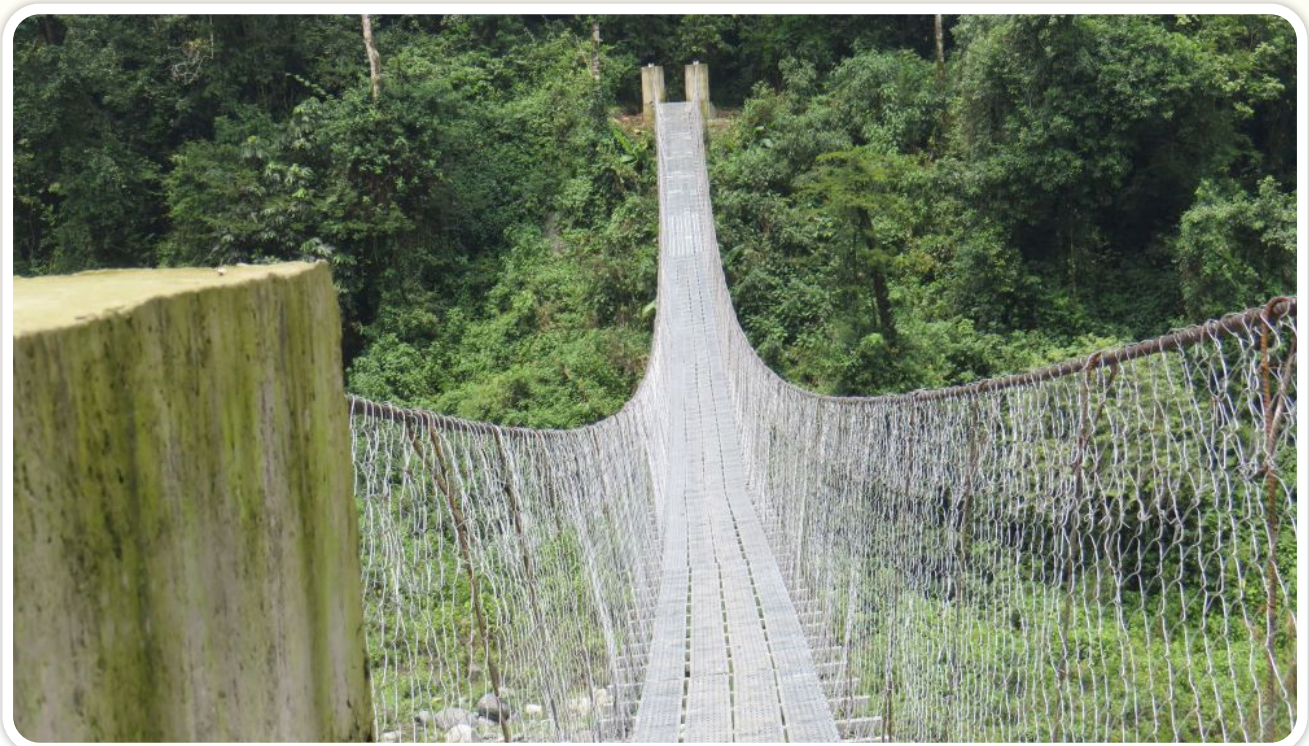
Once completed, the centre will include a café, clinic, auditorium, exhibition rooms, workshop, showroom, visitor briefing area, offices, a library and an open space for tourism activities.

Businge also revealed that the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has completed the construction of a suspension cable bridge known as Bulalo Bridge across River Mubuku,

connecting visitors to another part of the park rich in primates such as blue monkeys. The bridge provides easier access for visitors, particularly elderly tourists who prefer shorter nature walks within the park.

Meanwhile, the government has also launched a project to install 4.7 kilometres of metallic climbing ladders at steep rock sections along the trail leading to Margherita Peak. The ladders are expected to improve safety and ease for climbers navigating the difficult terrain.

The metallic ladder project is being implemented alongside the expansion of Nyabitaba Camp and the construction of a resting shelter at Mahoma, a location historically known as the place where the King



Suspension Cable Bridge constructed in Rwenzori National Park by WWF.



Ongoing construction of the Visitor Information Centre.

of the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu once stopped during his visit to the mountains.

The three projects; the metallic ladders, expansion of Nyabitaba Camp and construction of the resting shelter are valued at about 10 billion Uganda shillings.

In addition, the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities has launched a major capacity-building programme aimed at training 1,000 guides, porters and chefs in the Rwenzori region. The initiative is intended to promote professionalism in guiding and improve the quality of services offered to tourists visiting the park.

Speaking during the visit, Jovia Mbambu, the Tourism Officer for Kasese District Local Government, said the future of tourism in the district is very promising due to

increasing government investments and the growing participation of the private sector in the tourism industry.

Mbambu noted that accommodation capacity in the district has significantly expanded over the years, increasing from about 500 beds five years ago to more than 3,000 beds today, reflecting growing confidence in the tourism sector.

She also highlighted the growing international profile of the district through the Tusker Lite Mount Rwenzori Marathon, which recently earned World Athletics label status.

According to Mbambu, the marathon has greatly boosted the visibility of Kasese District and positioned it as a world-class tourism destination, attracting international attention to the Rwenzori region.

She said the recognition of the marathon on the global stage not only promotes sports tourism but also strengthens the overall tourism brand of the district, creating more opportunities for local businesses and communities that benefit from tourism activities.



✉ rwenzorieditorial@gmail.com

☎ 0701 498 242

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